

## *Busarellus nigricollis* (Black-collared Hawk)

Family: Accipitridae (Hawks, Kites and Eagles)

Order: Falconiformes (Diurnal Birds of Prey)

Class: Aves (Birds)



**Fig. 1.** Black-collared hawk, *Busarellus nigricollis*.

[<http://www.trogontours.com/south-america-tours/birding-northern-pantanal-and-cerrado/>, downloaded 1 March 2017]

**TRAITS.** A *Busarellus nigricollis* adult has a whitish head (Fig. 1). The males weigh 390-717g while females weigh 580-829g, with both having an average length of about 51cm (Meng, 2016). Juveniles are darker and browner than adults, with the tail and upper wing rufous barring being more prominent, while the crown has some black feathers (Bouglouan, 2009; Wikipedia 2016). The chest of *Busarellus nigricollis* is a lighter rufous-cinnamon colour, and there is a black crescent on the upper breast. The flight and tail feathers and bill are black, the eyes are reddish-brown, and the legs are bluish-white. The bones are fused on the inner toe of the black-collared hawk, which enables the bird to catch prey more efficiently since it prevents the toe from being bent backwards. This adaptive feature is also seen on sea eagles and true kites (Wikipedia, 2016).

**DISTRIBUTION.** The black-collared hawk is widespread in Central and South America (Fig. 2), from Mexico to northern Argentina. This hawk avoids the Andes entirely and is usually found in low-lying areas, but in Colombia it occurs up to an altitude of 500m. The black-collared hawk is a rare visitor to Trinidad and Tobago (Bouglouan, 2009; Wikipedia 2016).

**HABITAT AND ACTIVITY.** Habitats range from tropical or subtropical swamps and moist lowland forest with water in close proximity. Areas of fresh water as well as brackish water are frequently inhabited including mangroves, swampy lagoons, lakes and rivers with floating vegetation (Bouglouan, 2009; Oiseaux.net, 2009). The reason for this is that their diet consists of fish. Fishing begins early in the morning and continues throughout the day while in the late evening tall trees provide a resting haven. Short yet strong calls are generated when intruders invade the fishing area (Meng, 2016).

**FOOD AND FEEDING.** Food-seeking is done continuously throughout the day. The diet is mainly fish, however it also consumes rodents, aquatic insects, snails and lizards (Beautyofbirds, 2011). Hunting is either done while drifting through the air or more commonly while on a low perch over the water waiting for the ideal opportunity. Upon recognising the movement of fish at the surface of the water, the black-collared hawk briskly flies to the location and plunges into the water, catching the fish using its talons (Fig. 3). Feeding is done in shallow waters. Unlike other hawks, but similar to the osprey, the feet are covered with spines that facilitate capture of slimy prey (Oiseaux.net, 2009; Meng, 2016).

**REPRODUCTION.** The range dictates the breeding season. Nests are made of sticks and are found in mangroves or tall trees. The inside is lined with leaves. The nest is usually located in close proximity to water, approximately 12-15m above ground (Fig. 4). Some low nests have been seen in bushes. The female lays 1-2 spotted, greyish eggs (Bouglouan, 2009), and the adults hunt and feed their young by bringing prey to the nest (Haverschmidt, 1962; Oiseaux.net, 2009).

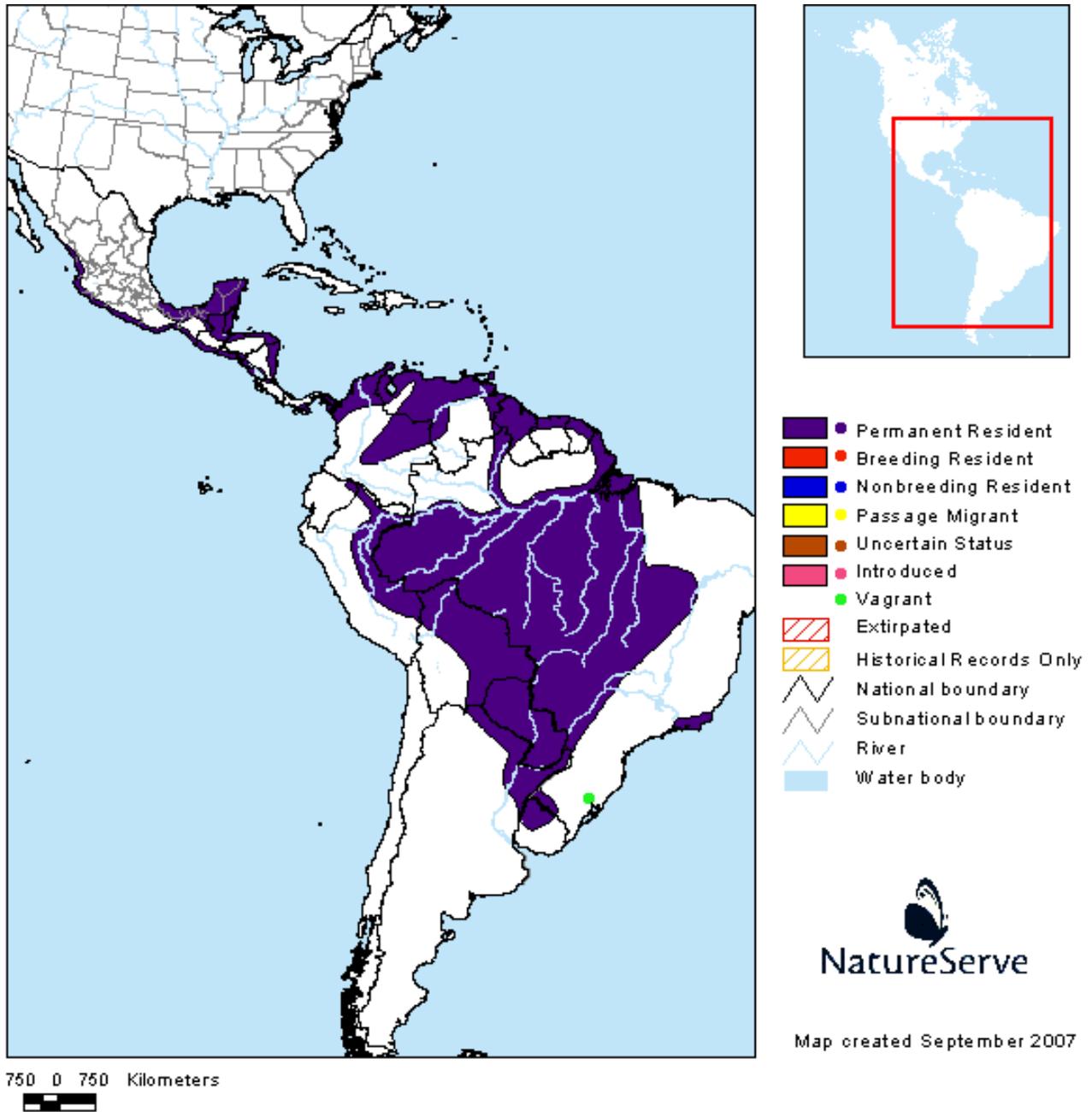
**APPLIED ECOLOGY.** This species does not appear to be vulnerable; although the population trend is decreasing, it has a large range (Ekstrom et al., 2016). The decreasing trend is due to habitat loss in some regions such as wetlands, due to drainage along with urban development.

## REFERENCES

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**Fig. 2.** Black-collared hawk geographical distribution.

[[http://www.avibirds.com/suhtml/Black-collared\\_Hawk.html](http://www.avibirds.com/suhtml/Black-collared_Hawk.html), downloaded 1 March 2017]



**Fig. 3.** Black-collared hawk grasping fish prey with its talons.

[<http://www.hbw.com/ibc/species/black-collared-hawk-busarellus-nigricollis>, downloaded 1 March 2017]



**Fig. 4.** Black-collared hawks at their nest.

[<http://www.gettyimages.com/detail/photo/black-collared-hawk-pair-at-nest-with-young-high-res-stock-photography/128625611>, downloaded 1 March 2017]